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Michigan Hunter Recruitment and Retention Work Group Recommendations

January 2006

**A report presented to Director Rebecca A. Humphries
of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources**



Michigan Recruitment and Retention Work Group Members

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Hunting is not merely an acquired taste; the instinct that finds delight in the sight and pursuit of game is bred into the very fiber of this race (man). We are dealing, therefore, with something that lies very deep. Some can live without opportunity for this exercise and control of the hunting instinct, just as I suppose some can live without work, play, love, business, or other vital adventures. But in these days we regard such deprivations as unsocial. Opportunity for exercise of all the normal instincts has come to be regarded more and more as an inalienable right.

-Aldo Leopold

Michigan Recruitment and Retention Work Group

Report and Recommendations

Perspective

Hunting is a tradition that has been in existence for more than 5 million years (Stanford 1999). In the United States alone, surveys show nearly 80% of Americans support hunting, although less than 10% actually participate. The economics of these statistics are astounding: some 18.5 million hunters contribute more than \$30 billion annually to the U.S. economy, supporting more than 986,000 jobs. Hunters underwrite—to the tune of \$1.5 billion annually—conservation programs benefiting all Americans who value wildlife and wild places (National Shooting Sports Foundation 2005).

Michigan has long enjoyed a strong hunting heritage. For almost one hundred years hunting has provided a tool for sound wildlife management, and has been the key link to educate citizens about the environment and the cornerstone of funding for Michigan natural resource conservation. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2002), hunters boosted Michigan's economy in 2001 by spending \$490 million in the state.

There were more than 865,000 licensed hunters in Michigan in 2002. The total number of Michigan licensed hunters has remained relatively static over the past 40 years. However, the proportion of hunters in the Michigan population has declined from an average of 10.1% in the 1960s to an average of 8.7% during 2000-2002 (Frawley 2004).

To reverse this trend, new hunters, especially non-traditional hunters, must be brought into the shooting and hunting sports. This will strengthen the funding base for conservation, include the increasing diversity of society and preserve Michigan's hunting heritage. One path to follow is enhancing social support systems for new hunters (Wentz and Seng 2000) by connecting the novice with a mentor who

understands and can explain the relationship between hunting and the natural world. As Aldo Leopold noted, this "...reminds us of our dependency on the soil-plant-animal-man food chain and of the fundamental organization of the biota" (Leopold 1949:178).

Besides a decline in the proportion of Michiganians who hunt, there has been a shift in Michigan hunting away from species that can be hunted by younger hunters with firearms toward deer hunting. As Frawley (2004) notes:

- Hunting in Michigan has become increasingly focused on deer hunting.
- At least 91% of license buyers purchased a deer hunting license.
- In 2002, 62% of the deer hunters purchased only a deer hunting license—compared to 51% in 1968.
- In contrast, a smaller proportion of small game hunters purchased only small game licenses in 2002 than in 1968.
- A major drop-off in hunting participation appears to occur between the late teen years and early 20s.
- In 1968, 45% of small game hunters purchased only a small game hunting license—compared to 16% in 2002.

The Mission

The Hunter Recruitment and Retention (HRR) Work Group was established in January 2005 by Director Rebecca A. Humphries of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Director Humphries charged the work group to review existing data, including Governor John Engler's Hunting and Fishing Heritage Task Force Recommendations published January 1996, and develop an action plan by June 2005 that identifies 3-5 approaches to increase the number and proportion of Michigan residents hunting and to retain new as well as current hunters. She challenged work group members to think about key priorities, both in terms of individual roles and those of the organizations represented, and to work in a cooperative process.

The Work Group

The HRR work group was comprised of members from the university, governmental (DNR), educational, non-governmental (conservation and environmental groups), and hunting enthusiast communities. The group acknowledged the need for input and review by a broad range of stakeholders with a vested interest in and appreciation for hunting, and an understanding of science-based conservation management of Michigan's natural resources.

Group members:

Chuck Nelson, Facilitator, Michigan State University
Patricia Stewart, Chairperson, Michigan Department
of Natural Resources
Rob Anderson, Michigan Farm Bureau
Maury DeYoung, Sportspersons Ministries
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Jerry Keck, Michigan Bow Hunters
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Dave Noble, Ducks Unlimited
Tom Oliver, DNR
Mike Parker, Pheasants Forever
Ben Peyton, MSU
Dan Potter, National Wild Turkey Federation
Rodney Stokes, DNR
John Wencley, Troy Public Schools
Gary Williams, MSU Extension
Steve Wyckoff, Ducks Unlimited

The Process

The group as a whole met five times. At the second meeting, it was the consensus to break into four sub-groups:

1. Access/Supply of Hunting Opportunity
2. Companion/Mentor Networks
3. Education/Public Relations/Outreach
4. Regulations and Enforcement

Each sub-group met several times in addition to the meetings of the whole, and was asked to define and identify barriers. The groups discussed obstacles such as a disconnect with and lack of appreciation for the natural world in today's youth (Louv 2004), urban sprawl and the loss of access to quality hunting habitat, lack of social support for young hunters, hunting age restrictions, list, discuss and evaluate current programmatic approaches to recruiting and retaining hunters, suggest 3-5 new, "doable" programmatic approaches, set measurable goals/objectives, and describe how to evaluate performance to meet measurable goals/objectives over a defined time period.

The groups were asked to identify barriers to hunting and prioritize their recommendations based on the following criteria:

- Overall feasibility
- Cost
- Impact
- Governance (Natural Resources Commission or Director's order, legislation, etc.)
- Evaluative capability
- Creation of social support system
- Accountability
- Mission fulfillment

The Sub-Group Recommendations

The three top priorities of each sub-group provide important guidance to developing final recommendations. These may involve integrating two or more recommendations into a more comprehensive approach to recruitment or retention. To implement such sweeping recommendations may involve legislation, incentives related to existing grant programs and forming of new coalitions among stakeholders. Following are the top three recommendations from each of the four sub-groups:

*We hunt because we love it...Among
nature pursuits, hunting and fishing
connect us most
profoundly with animals and
nature...When we hunt we experience
extreme alertness
to the point of an altered state of
consciousness.
-Dr. Randall Eaton*

Access/Supply of Hunting Opportunity

1. Reinvigorate the public access program through increasing landowner payments, providing options meeting landowner needs for land management and security (e.g., small game hunting only, time of entry limits, etc.), multi-year leases and quality maps (similar to those used in KS and ND). The program would be funded by those who hunt in southern Michigan through a visible access stamp on their license.
2. Create a new "habitat stamp" similar to those in use in the plains states that provides funds to enhance wildlife habitat on private lands of willing owners, links to agricultural conservation programs and provides additional incentives to those enrolled in the Public Access program.
3. Better publicize the availability of public lands for hunting in southern Michigan and explore opportunities to open additional publicly owned lands to hunting such as MDOT properties.

Companion/Mentor Networks

1. Create and use opportunities to infuse shooting sports, hunting and related outdoor recreation into existing successful mentor programs, such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters or the emerging 4-H program.
2. Produce a Web site that can serve event sponsors and mentors as well as apprentices seeking information and opportunities for participation.
3. Collect information over time to track trends in hunting recruitment and retention. One approach would be to follow a panel of hunter safety students over time with a Web-based survey diary type of instrument on a secure system.

Education/PR/Outreach

1. Work with Michigan Recreation and Parks Association and local community members to incorporate hunting, fishing and camping programs into park and recreation programs.
2. Partner with the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board to give extra points to applicants who foster natural resource based recreation (e.g. hunting, fishing, camping, etc. integral to the DNR's core mission.
3. Work with the state Department of Education and other partners to develop K-12 environmental and outdoor education curricula that clearly identifies the role of hunting and hunters in conservation and environmental stewardship.

Regulations and Enforcement

1. Lower the minimum age from 12 to 10 for hunter safety certification and for all small game, waterfowl, and turkey hunting; and lower the minimum age from 14 to 12 for all big game hunting. It is imperative that language be included that states the youth must be under parental/legal guardian, "within arm's reach," or words to that effect.
2. Increase and expand access for hunters with disabilities.
3. Standardize and simplify the DNR hunting/fishing/trapping digests.

The Final Recommendations

Each individual group member was asked to select at least five top priorities from the 12 recommendations. Three final recommendations rose to the top:

1. Provide additional public hunting in southern Michigan.

Rationale: Southern Michigan has over 8 million people, and only 2% of public land (south of Bay City to Muskegon) is open to hunting (mostly state game and wildlife areas and portions of state park and recreation areas). In the 1970s, the Public Access Stamp program provided an 180,000 additional acres for public hunting (almost equal to the public land hunting opportunities). In 2004, this was down to less than 20,000 acres. Additional land for public hunting will enhance hunting recruitment and retention by facilitating the integration of hunting recreation in local and regional activities for southern Michigan residents and assisting the DNR in managing wildlife populations.

Approaches:

- Reinvigorate the hunter access program
 - Recognize voluntary landowner participation is the key
 - Learn from ongoing landowner study
 - Seek multi-year agreements
 - Higher annual payments for longer term agreements
 - Inform landowners of their statutory protection from liability through state recreational user statute (work through Farm Bureau and county conservation districts)
 - Meet owner needs for land management and security
 - May involve limiting species hunted, seasons, sporting arms
 - DNR meet regularly with access program participating landowners
 - DNR conduct survey of landowners every five years.

- Provide high quality maps similar to programs in ND, KS, etc.
- Explore ALL publicly owned lands for hunting potential
- Explore corporately owned lands for public hunting potential
- Showcase publicly owned hunting lands (especially in southern Michigan) in booklet format
- Fund through a mandatory hunter access fee for all hunting in southern Michigan
- Use current Public Access Program assessment data when available
- Explore increased lease payments
 - Highest rate for best habitat
 - Explore links with habitat restoration/enhancement partners/programs
- Explore a property tax incentive based system with farmers patterned after the successful Commercial Forest Act with forest landowners that provides more than two million acres of public hunting land in the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower

2. Provide opportunity for a wider spectrum of society to participate in hunting.

Rationale: Youth face an increasingly complex array of positive and negative leisure time choices. By the time they reach 12, many are so busy in non-hunting pursuits, often not involving parents, that they never start hunting and lack opportunities to maintain strong family bonds. Providing the opportunity to be certified through hunter safety training and hunt at age 10 will facilitate parental/guardian involvement in their children's leisure time through mandatory parental/guardian supervision in all youth hunting experiences, enhance safety by providing training to those at a receptive age, and strengthen respect for the environment among youth. The experience of other states with hunter safety training requirements that allow hunting at younger ages is positive

for safety, hunter recruitment and parental involvement. Also, providing a more welcoming set of opportunities is vital for adults with little or no previous hunting experience, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, and women/girls.

Approaches:

- Reduce the age for hunter safety certification from 12 to 10
- Recruit and train additional hunter safety training instructors, especially females and persons of color
- Stress the inclusiveness of hunting as a form of recreation
- Enhance educational emphasis on the importance of conservation and the role of hunting in conservation
- Enhance educational emphasis on ethical hunting behavior
- Provide adult-oriented hunter safety courses
- Reduce the age for small game hunting from 12 to 10. All hunters in the field under age 17 must be directly supervised by a parent, guardian or responsible adult. Reduce the age for firearm big game hunting from 14 to 12. Youth ages 12-13 must be within arm's reach. Parents will be held responsible for ensuring proper supervision.
- Include entire family, not just targeted youth, in hunter recruitment/retention programs
- Cooperate with other states' hunter education programs through the International Hunter Education Association
- Develop parental guides/booklets and instructional sessions for parents/guardians of hunter education students

It is a vacation from the human condition...that submerges man deliberately into something of a religious rite and emotion in which homage is paid to what is divine, transcendent, in the laws of nature.

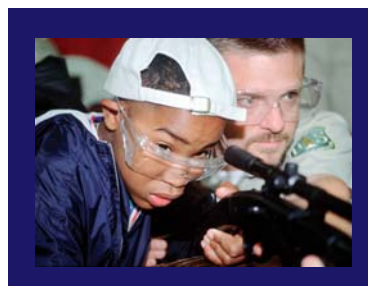
-Jose Ortega Y Gasset

3. Create and expand opportunities to infuse hunting and related outdoor recreation into existing and emerging mentoring programs.

Rationale: Many youth lack parents, parents with outdoor experience or the wherewithal to provide equipment or travel to enjoy outdoor pursuits such as hunting. Many youth-serving organizations provide critical mentoring to opportunities with caring adults such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and 4-H. In addition, many local park and recreation agencies have skilled youth mentors on their staff, a recreational land base and facilities which will support recreational hunting and a need to manage wildlife populations.

Approaches:

- Facilitate hunting opportunities through willing Big Brothers Big Sisters chapters
 - Provide hunter safety instruction for youth and mentors if necessary
 - Link participants with partners who provide access to hunting land, equipment
 - Facilitate hunting opportunities through willing county 4-H organizations
 - Link to existing and growing 4-H shooting program
 - Provide hunter safety instruction for youth and mentors if necessary
 - Link participants with partners who provide access to hunting land, equipment
- Better coordinate and publicize youth-related hunting events through conservation organizations, local rod and gun clubs, etc.
 - Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Michigan Duck Hunters Association, Whitetails Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ruffed Grouse Society, etc
 - Establish a Web site to clearly publicize and help coordinate mentoring opportunities for hunting to reach youth, parents, guardians, etc.



Hunting continues to renew us, give us humbling mortality insights, and provide hope for our next role escape. There are so very few things in our lives that yield these most precious of gifts: renewal, humility, insight, and hope. We must treat hunting with the same reverence we hold for our religions, our children, and the world's greatest works of art.

-Dr. Lee Foote, University of Alberta

The Action Plan

The following action plan is proposed:

Recommendation	When to Begin	Primary Partners	Measurable Goal	When to Complete Evaluation
1. Provide additional public hunting in southern Michigan.	Spring 2006	DNR, Pheasants Forever, Michigan Farm Bureau	Increase public hunting by 5 percent Produce high quality maps showing public lands open to hunting	Fall 2007 Summer 2007
2. Provide opportunity for a wider spectrum of society to participate in hunting.	Spring 2006	MUCC and other conservation groups	Support legislation giving parents/guardians control in all youth hunting experiences and reduce age requirements for hunting and hunter safety Empower Natural Resources Commission with authority to set hunting age	Fall 2006 Fall 2006
3. Create and expand opportunities to infuse hunting and related outdoor recreation into existing and emerging mentoring programs.	Immediately	DNR, Big Brothers Big Sisters, 4-H, Boy and Girl Scouts	Hunter safety program implemented in BBBS and 4-H DNR Web site launched for mentoring hunting opportunities--pitch to media Seek grants supporting education, outreach and recruitment	Summer 2006 Spring 2006

External Reviewers

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Bill Kendy, Commemorative Bucks

Lynn Marla, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman

Gary White, Hunter Safety Instructor

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First, it's clear that wildlife and habitat conservation is important to the sportsmen and women of America. But the reverse is equally true: sportsmen and women are of vital importance to successful wildlife conservation. These folks are a powerful voice for conservation and a powerful force in our economy as well.
- Steven A. Williams, Former Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

APPENDIX A. Sub-Group Recommendations

Access/Supply of Hunting Opportunities Sub-Group

1. Reinvigorate the Public Access program
 - a. Program should have a distinct system to purchase separate, visible access to cooperating private lands (e.g. former “stamp”)
 - b. Focus on SLP
 - c. Have leases of 5 years or longer
 - i. Works off the model of many farm programs with 10-15 year life (e.g. CREP, CRP)
 - d. May be an excellent link with a habitat/access stamp as done in many other states (e.g., prairie states)
 - e. Provide a couple of landowner options in relationship to season of use, type of hunting/ weapon
 - i. KS does this very effectively; e.g. - September 15 – November 14 only, no firearms, September 15 – March 1, etc.
 - f. Have high quality maps
 - i. Again KS has high quality maps printed in a booklet on newsprint with road network and sections with color coded parcels open to hunting and colors indicating season/weapon of use
 - g. Seek and pay more for high quality habitat
 - i. For example, incentive payment based on % of lands for hunting in CRP, CREP, some form of habitat improvement such as that funded through a habitat stamp
 - h. Increase leasing rates
 - i. Currently about \$4/acre, verses \$12 to \$60 under private leases
 - i. MDOT lands. Great potential in S. MI. Are they closed due to safety concerns?
2. Creation of a new “Habitat Stamp” as seen in many other states.
 - a. Need a separate habitat stamp, not built into a general license. Hunters need to be aware of the fee. Functions of habitat stamp:
 - i. Lease private lands
 - ii. Increase habitat quality on state/private land
 - iii. Mid-contract management on CRP lands
 - b. NRC would support this as part of 2006 licensing bill.

- c. Stamp amount approx. \$15. Legislature would likely decrease requested fee, so do not start at \$8 or \$10.
- d. Hunters believe habitat is the key to wildlife populations, so they will support a fee, particularly if access is tied to it.

Our task is not to convince sportsmen to pay, it is to deliver a program that has results!

3. Investigate the concept of a tax break in return for hunting access similar to that for the Commercial Forest Act of 1925 as amended

- a. This has 80 years of success for commercial forests in providing hunting and fishing opportunity
- b. Supported by that industry and tax breaks are something those in agriculture are knowledgeable about
- c. Challenges may be how to replace lost revenue to local units. This again may be where a habitat/access stamp is valuable as hunters would visibly pay for this access privilege and farmers would know it
- d. May be considerable interest in this program, especially if positively linked with PA 116 which most in agriculture understand and use
- e. Not a tax break for those who are land speculators who want to reduce property taxes
 - i. Do like forestry where it needs active forestry (agricultural in our case although forestry may be valuable too) management to qualify
- f. Incentives for landowners enrolled in Farm Bill programs – CREP

4. Effectively use youth events to form social networks between landowners (e.g. farmers), new hunters (youth) and their parents/guardians.

- a. Key link of hunters to farmers in a venue where youth and farmers may be more receptive to each other
- b. Have farmer present on how to get along with landowners
 - i. “If you want to hunt on my land, you need to ask permission ahead of time, be polite, listen to and follow any special rules/situations, etc.”
- c. Also may introduce parents/youth to concept of leasing, etc.
- d. Research on farmers and non-farmers willingness to allow hunting declines as one goes outside the network of friends and family (Nelson and Schomaker 1996)
 - i. This would expand social network so prospective hunters can become acquaintances or friends of those in agriculture or other large land owners that may provide hunting opportunity

- e. Key will be to do this on the local level
 - i. Coordinators of local youth event (DU, PF, NWT, etc.) work with local Farm Bureau County Committee or other agricultural landowner entity
 - f. This is not a big splash program
 - i. Gains come a hunter and a landowner at a time in the building of social networks
5. Strong support for youth hunts on public lands
- a. Very positive experience with youth waterfowl weekend
 - i. Effectively uses public lands in S. MI and elsewhere
 - ii. Good shooting opportunity
 - iii. Nice weather
 - iv. Minimal competition
 - v. Doesn't detract from regular all age hunt as some accuse about youth deer hunt
 - b. Not supportive of areas set aside only for youth to hunt on game areas or other lands
 - i. Takes away the comradery of young and old, not like fishing where youth can go out on their own
6. Need to better publicize the availability of public lands for hunting in S. MI
- a. While they only makeup small % of land base, they are available and some underused for hunting
 - i. Need to highlight role of state park and recreation areas in providing S. MI hunting
 - ii. Need to highlight role of state game and wildlife areas in providing S. MI hunting
 - b. Need to highlight opportunities that are underused
 - i. Rabbit, squirrel, predator hunting
 - c. Create one map book showing all accessible land such as in North Dakota hunting guide

Other Suggestions Relating to Broad Topic of Hunter Recruitment and Retention

- 7. Research needed to follow up on past studies from the 1990s regarding willingness of private landowners to allow hunting and for whom

8. Research needed to track sample of youth who complete hunter safety through multiple years to begin to better diagnose barriers to hunting and ways to reduce/eliminate barriers
 - a. Use internet, web based poll in a diary format to track hunting effort, barriers to hunting, etc. over time
 - b. Kids would find such fun, attractive
 - c. Cuts expense considerably, quick data capture, automatic data entry
 - d. Could request email for this purpose with selected hunter safety classes and follow cohorts for up to a decade at much less expense than a mail, telephone or personal interview panel

Companions/Mentor Networks Sub-Group

Sub-group Mission

Identify existing and potential mentoring and sponsorship programs that can effectively increase hunter recruitment and retention and make recommendations to create, improve, or expand such programs.

Definitions of Sponsorship and Mentoring

Mentor: an individual who serves as an immediate role model, trusted counselor, guide, or teacher who provides opportunities for development, growth and support to less experienced individuals (apprentices).

Apprentice: an inexperienced individual who participates and experiences an activity being taught to them by a mentor who provides information, encouragement and advice.

Sponsorship: a 'partnership' between individuals and/or organizations in which the sponsor endorses an activity and/or provides guidance for an individual.

Mentoring: an educational process where a mentor provides guidance and opportunities to an apprentice over an extended period of time.

Current Conditions and Trends

- Increasing interest by women to participate in hunting
- Decreasing proportion of Michigan population participating in hunting
- Decreasing participation rate by hunters in hunting small game species
- Participation rate for hunting deer demonstrates a long-term increase but has shown declines over the past 3-5 years
- Continuing expansion of urban areas
- Greater than 50% of "littles" (apprentices) list hunting and fishing as an interest with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the Lakeshore in Muskegon

Hunter Recruitment and Retention Incentives Associated with Mentoring

- Provides role models
- Provides positive community image
- Promotes education and involvement in natural world and conservation
- Is a very social activity
- Develops appreciation/respect (nature, wildlife, experience, others, etc...)
- Provides senses of achievement
- Available to anyone
- Inexpensive
- Teaches and reinforces life skills (decision making, patience, etc...)
- Can easily be incorporated into other hobbies or activities
- Develops family and friendship bonds
- Is a safe, healthy activity

Hunter Recruitment and Retention Barriers Associated with Mentoring

- Absence of role models
- Competing interests
- Increasing urbanization
- Limited opportunities to hunt
- Limited access to land for hunting
- Perceived costs of hunting and equipment
- Conservation message in schools
- Stigma associated with shooting sports
- Age requirements for hunting
- Possible lack of family participation

Current Programmatic Approaches to Hunting Mentoring and Sponsorship

The committee compiled an extensive list of programs within Michigan which offer opportunities to youth, women, and individuals. Though many programs may be perceived as “mentoring” the committee discovered that:

- A large number of organizations are active in sponsorship activities for new individuals
 - *workshops*
 - *youth hunts*
 - *summer camps*
 - *programs/memberships for youth, women, etc...*
- Few organizations provide “true” mentoring programs
 - *Big Brothers/Big Sisters*
 - *4-H*

Barriers Specific to the Recruitment of Mentors and Sponsors

- Perceived time commitment
 - *length of commitment*
 - *number of expected activities*
- Perceived costs
- Perceived “lack of benefit” to the mentor
- Additional mentor requirements
 - *background checks*
 - *additional firearm safety training/certification*
- Terminology
 - *“Mentor” may be more intimidating than a term such as “Guide”*

Specific Opportunities To Increase Recruitment and Retention Through Mentoring

Strategy #1: Create and use opportunities to infuse shooting sports, hunting and related outdoor recreation into existing successful mentor programs such as Big Brothers and Sisters or the emerging 4H program.

Rationale: Very effective mentor programs exist now with youth but they do not regularly provide opportunities for apprentices interested in hunting and shooting sports activities. This approach would take advantage of existing systems with proven success. As an example, the approach has been very successful in the “Pass It On” program in Kansas, Texas, and Pennsylvania.

5 Year Goal: Initiate at least four successful integrations of shooting sports, hunting and/or related outdoor recreation into existing mentor programs that have established effective means of recruiting mentors and apprentices and for accessing opportunities for mentors and apprentices to participate in those activities (e.g., areas for hunting, shooting). Success will be demonstrated not only by sustained participation but growth in additional regions and/or organizations.

Expected outcomes:

- Serve to demonstrate success of this approach and encourage further participation
- Potential to impact on substantial numbers of youth
- Provides access to youth outside the usual hunting community who might not otherwise be presented with these opportunities
- Potential to influence current mentors who are not hunters or shooting sports participants

Anticipated Barriers:

- Lack of existing system for recruiting mentors and apprentices
- Mentor training may be needed
- Recruit organizations as partners who can provide a pool of potential recruits
- Lack of equipment, especially archery which is more individualized
- Possible social stigma against hunting and shooting sports among those who administer these mentor programs
- Lack of advocates within the mentor programs for this type of activity to be integrated.

Additional Notes:

Many existing mentoring programs are aimed at “kids at risk”; thought should be given to expanding offerings to a cross section of youth and adults.

Strategy #2: Design and establish connections among existing organizations, programs, and events to encourage developing expanding interests and participation among youth and adults.

Rationale: Youth and adults are exposed to some aspects in episodic experiences with no opportunity for continued exposure and development to other related activities. For example, Archery in the Schools should be linked to opportunities to pursue more archery or develop bow hunting skills for those who are so inclined. A formal communication network could enhance the probability that participants know of these opportunities and are encouraged to continue or expand their interests.

5 Year Goal 2A: Create partnerships among landowners, corporate businesses, organizations, sportsmen, communities and DNR (An example of a successful program is Colorado’s “Partners In the Field”)

- Apply the unique skills, abilities, and wisdom of groups and individuals to a variety of hunting programs
- Create a “network” among partners for sharing resources and ideas
- Establish a positive public image for all partners

- Pool scarce resources needed to develop key programs to benefit the people of Michigan

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced recruitment into shooting sports- related participation due to more complete opportunities for learning and socialization.
- Enhanced participation in each of the linked events as awareness grows through increased marketing by the communication network
- Enhanced ability to create opportunities, obtain equipment and financial support, plan and develop additional outreach and sponsor events designed to enhance youth and adult mentoring and public participation in hunting and shooting activities
- Create a source of mentors, skilled sportsmen and women, and a social support network for novice hunters and shooters
- Create a structured means of dispersing information

Anticipated Barriers:

- An administrator will be needed to create and maintain the partnerships
- The large number and diversity of partners may be difficult to manage.
- There may be conflict and/or competition among potential partners that need to be addressed.

5 Year Goal 2B: Create links among existing programs that currently sponsor events to introduce youth and adults to various aspects of the shooting sports and hunting recreations; e.g., Becoming an Outdoor Woman, MUCC Camps, Wilderness Camps, Archery in the Schools, NSSF Scholastic Clay Target Program, NWTf Jakes Program, Sportsperson's Ministries International and many others.

- Complete an inventory of programs and events that should be linked.
- Identify appropriate connections and means of making these effective and synergistic.
- Create a communication network and agreements to facilitate the process of linking
- Show the benefits to linked sponsors so that they are motivated to maintain the communication and system.
- Establish an annual conference among linked sponsors to provide for education, organization and maintenance of the network.

Expected Outcomes:

- Enhanced recruitment into shooting sports- related participation due to more complete opportunities for learning and socialization

- Enhanced participation in each of the linked events as awareness grows through increased marketing by the communication network

Anticipated Barriers:

- An administrator will be needed to create the plan, establish the network and organize it to a self maintenance stage.
- The communication network will need to find leadership to organize annual meetings and address emerging problems.
- The large number and diversity of members may be difficult to manage.
- There may be conflict and/or competition among potential partners that need to be addressed.

Strategy # 3: Produce a Web site that can serve event sponsors and mentors as well as apprentices seeking information and opportunities for participation.

Rationale: Many events and sponsors appear to be ongoing now but each is independent in its marketing approach. The website can become a clearing house for communication among these agents. A comprehensive site can also serve the need of a prospective recruit looking for opportunities to get involved in shooting sports-related experiences. This centralized information source utilizes what is fast becoming a universal medium for members in our society.

5 Year Goal: Create a user friendly addition to existing DNR Web site that provides information at several levels. Information provided would include opportunities to attend sponsored or mentored activities; guidance for getting started in related recreation activities; hunting information; hunter education schedules; workshops and clinics; maps and directions to areas for participation; etc.

Outcomes:

- Sponsors have a means of communicating and knowing of the full range of opportunities being offered.
- Participants can obtain timely and appropriate information to reduce barriers of getting into these recreation activities.
- Sponsors can market their events and ensure better, cost effective participation.
- Supports several other strategies being recommended

Anticipated Barriers:

- Web site will require intensive management to keep it current and comprehensive.
- The name will need to be “intuitively obvious” to the uninitiated; “hunting heritage” may not communicate this appropriately to the intended audience.
- this will serve those with some interest but will not reach out to potential interests who are not actively seeking information.

- based on current Web site design, this proposed site may be very difficult for the public to access and navigate.

Strategy #4: Create a foundation capable of centralizing funds available to subsidize sponsoring and mentored activities.

Rationale: Currently funds are available from diverse sources which individually are marketed and administered. It is difficult for event sponsors to keep track of all available funds and make timely application for assistance.

5 Year Goal: Establish a fully functional and legal foundation with an accumulation of funds available for qualifying sponsors to offer opportunities to recruit interested participants in shooting sports- related recreation.

Outcomes:

- Event sponsors would be able to compete for and access funds more efficiently.
- Donors would get the benefit of publicity with any foundation grant.
- Donors would have less cost of administration of funds and assurance of effective results.

Anticipated Barriers:

- There may be expensive legal constraints to setting up a credible foundation that donors will utilize.
- expertise is needed on how to structure such a foundation
- some incentives will be needed to market this idea to donors.

Alternative 5 Year Goal: In lieu of the foundation, a donor clearinghouse could be maintained so that needy sponsors and donors can easily locate each other. This might be a part of the previously mentioned website.

Strategy #5: Assertively continue to collect information needed to more effectively address the hunter recruitment problem.

Rationale: The committee has done its work based on collective experience but with little scientific data to guide us. Many of our recommendations are based on assumptions or observations and may need to be validated before expensive responses are undertaken to address associated problems.

5 Year Goal: Create a list of information need priorities and implement information gathering projects to address the top category of information needs deemed “critical”. A “needs assessment” will be conducted as a precursor to implementing some recommended strategies which target assumed needs; information is needed to “validate” our assumptions.

Outcomes:

- Many uncertainties would be reduced regarding causes of diminishing participation and effectiveness of potential recruitment/retention strategies.
- Agency responses should more efficient and effective.
- Programs will be evaluated to determine their cost-effectiveness or how to improve their results.

Anticipated Barriers:

- Such research, whether primary or secondary (use of existing data), will be expensive and will take considerable time to implement and interpret.
- Priorities will need to be set to identify critical needs.
- There is no systematic exchange of such information among state agencies, so much will have to be generated as new information.
- Traditionally, there has not been a collection and analysis of this type of information on a broad scale so (slow, expensive) primary research will often be required.

Potential Needs:

- Identifying how many current opportunities are serving primarily hunter-related youth who would be recruited anyway.
- Identify how we can recruit more successfully from non-hunting backgrounds
- Identify needs to encourage hunting as a family-oriented event.

Education/PR/Outreach Sub-Group

Education :

The committee recommend that the DNR get copies of all environmental, natural resource, outdoor education programs and make the list available;

Recommend that Hunter Education Program lower the age limit requirement;

Recommend that the Hunter Education Program revise it curriculum to include information on how to be successful hunter; how to enjoy the out of doors; and Michigan habitat;

Include in the education material that is going into the schools, information on hunting and fishing in Michigan. In training the educators in the various environmental/outdoor/natural resource curriculums, include a unit on hunting and fishing;

Survey what is out there currently in terms of education programs in schools, i.e. LAPs, Project Wild, Green Wings, Archery In the Schools, etc.;

Recommend developing a 21st Century approach to reaching youth in the areas of environment, outdoor and natural resource programs/curriculum, i.e. website, CD ROMS, a Kids Page on what is happening in the DNR, DEQ, etc.;

Partnerships:

Partner with the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association to do a pilot program to offer outdoor, hunting, fishing, natural resource base programs as part of the local parks and recreation departments list of programs. For example: Pilot in 5-10 cities in the state to have them include archery, gun safety, becoming an outdoor woman, fly fishing and tying, etc.;

Do the same as above with churches;

Develop a partnership with the Unions (UAW, Teamsters, etc.) in offering hunting and fishing workshops for their members and families;

Work with MRPA and local communities to have hunting, fishing and camping programs as part of their summer playground programs;

Expand the Archery in Schools Program;

Insist that the DNR train it's staff that is currently responsible for Becoming an Outdoor Woman, Hunter Safety, Hunter Heritage, Archery in the Schools, etc., that their role should not be that of putting on these programs but that of training, recruitment, and coordination, so that these programs can be delivered all over the state at the same time;

Partner with the MNRTF Board/Program to have them give extra points to applicant that provide programs that foster hunting, fishing, camping, and other outdoor recreation activities that are core to DNR's mission;

Public Relations:

The sub committee believe that this is the most important element of our sub committee's charge; 20

Use TV, radio, and other public service announcements to get the word out about hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation;

The use of the above media should be ongoing and not just a one shot deal;

DNR should project a new, friendlier DNR;

The DNR should constantly develop messages that answer the question on all outdoor participants' minds: "What have you done for me lately?"

DNR should work with other hunting and fishing groups to improve the public image of the DNR and hunting and fishing;

DNR should promote the message that Conservation is for everyone;

Create a DNR television program and a monthly or by monthly magazine that tells the DNR story;

Educate in the Hunter Safety Program beyond the current curriculum;

DNR Director need to reach out to constituents more. Use the TV, radio, other media to talk to constituents. Meet often and regular with sportsmen groups. DNR Director and key staff have not been visible in recent years;

Survey various interest groups to see what they are doing in the areas of education, outreach, and public relations and work with them so both the DNR and the groups are successful;

Odds and Ends:

Don't reinvent the wheel! If other organizations are finding success, partner with them to get the hunting and fishing message out. For example, If the National Wildlife Federation has an "in" with urban school districts, then do not go compete with them. Join them and help explain their program or curriculum to include our hunting and fishing heritage message;

Consider lowering non resident hunting fees to attract former Michigan residents to return to hunt with their families;

Make all hunting and fishing license for retirees the same (age). Having different ages for senior license is confusing (not sure if this is true);

Develop a public broadcast program or message that show what hunters and anglers contribute to Michigan's natural resources;

Develop a program to show the public how to create wildlife habitat on their land; also show how the public can assist the DNR/state in improving habitat on state land, and how they can get involved in DNR sponsored stewardship projects.

Regulations and Enforcement Sub-Group

Current law provides a poor definition of “supervision” in regards to youths hunting alone. It also only applies to licensed youths.... A parent who allows his unlicensed minor child to hunt unsupervised is exempt from this law.

Recommendation is to redefine this to provide adequate, enforceable supervision for all hunting activities and to ensure proper oversight in all hunting situations.

Current language in statute is :

324.43517 Hunting by minor child.

Sec. 43517. A parent or legal guardian of a minor child shall not permit or allow the minor child to hunt under the authority of a license issued pursuant to this part on land upon which the parent or guardian is not regularly domiciled without being accompanied by the parent or guardian or another person authorized by the parent or guardian who is 17 years of age or older.

Nowhere in law is “accompanied by” defined. As such, it is left open to too much interpretation. One recommendation is to base a new definition on the following definition from the ORV part of 451 which reads:

(w) “Visual supervision” means the direct observation of the operator with the unaided or normally corrected eye, where the observer is able to come to the immediate aid of the operator.

Possible draft language might be :

A parent or legal guardian of a child less than 17 years of age shall not permit or allow the minor child to hunt or take game on land upon which the parent or guardian is not regularly domiciled without being visual supervision provided by the parent or guardian or another person authorized by the parent or guardian who is 17 years of age or older. For the purposes of this part, “visual supervision” means the direct observation of the youth with the unaided or normally corrected eye, where the observer is able to come to the immediate assistance of the youth.”

-this is a definition needing statutory amendments, regardless of any attempts to change age limits on youth hunters.

Current law requires young hunters to be 12 years old prior to obtaining a hunting license of any kind. A youth who lives on enclosed farmland, however, may hunt small game at any age, without a license, without hunter safety.

Recommendation is to lower the minimum age from 12 to 10 for eligibility for hunter safety certification and for all small game, waterfowl, and turkey hunting.

The committee considered the following factors:

-hunting provides genuine equal opportunity to both genders, and allows full participation by youths with disabilities (including severe disabilities)-few outdoors activities can make that boast- need to stress this point: the earlier we can safely introduce youths to hunting, the better chance that they will follow through.

-Current regulations prevent kids <12 years old from actively participating in hunting, when many are capable of safely hunting with adequate supervision at younger ages.

-only 2 of 14 states in Miss. Flyway prohibit hunting until age 12 (WI/MI)

-starting youth hunting at age 10 may encourage a return of the concept of small game hunting as an “apprenticeship” prior to big game hunting

-killing of small game species is less dramatic than deer, etc

-small game hunting (for the most part) allows, even encourages, talking, snacking, movement, fidgeting, etc.

-private land access for small game hunting may be easier than for big game hunting- landowners may be more willing to share their land for rabbits, ducks, etc.

-small game hunting can take place in shorter periods of activity than big game hunting.easier to quit for a day when a youth gets bored; not as much prep time required in many cases

-lowering the age would increase the numbers of hunters in MI

-lowering the age provides an earlier opportunity to teach the concept of stewardship of our outdoors.

Many adults have noted their child's ability and interest in hunting at ages under.....the parent has the burden of choosing between allowing

That youth to participate (thereby sending a subtle message that it is OK to break THIS particular law....) or upholding the regulation and risk losing

The child's interest as he/she experiences all of the other stimuli presented to kids via computers, TV and other sources.

-Increased participation in small game hunting may renew overall interest in those hunting activities that lend themselves to "mentoring".....duck and goose hunting, rabbit hunting, dove hunting, turkey hunting

-Increased participation in small game hunting may generate both more interest in support of HAP (Hunter Access Program), and more willingness for landowners to participate.

few outdoors pastimes appear to provide a better introduction for youths into hunting than dove hunting.....

- lots of shooting opportunities

- inexpensive sport (other than shells)

- doves are excellent eating, easily-prepared and cooked

- camouflage clothing

- mentoring experience allows conversation, meals, etc.

- very little needed re lands to actively participate in dove hunting

- season provides mild weather

- best dove hunting time, early season, does not conflict with many other outdoors activities (exceptions are early goose hunting and some salmon fishing)

- limited demands on land to attract doves may encourage more HAP enrollment

Costs to change?

- there may be programmatic costs to re-tool the HS program to suit a slightly younger audience.

- need to select a focus group, including HS instructors, teachers, others, to look at specific concerns associated with lowering the HS training age to 10 (currently 10 year-olds can attend, just don't receive certificate)

- there may be a dramatic increase in license numbers, resulting in an increase in matching federal funds. Depending on license fee structure, there could be an immediate increase in game and fish dollars as well.
- The department's overall message would be delivered directly to youths at a younger age than ever before through hunter safety and an interest in the traditions of hunting.
- allowing small game hunting at a younger age would allow parents the opportunity to legitimately involve their kids in traditions of hunting earlier.a better chance of youths being "hooked for life."
- starting out a youngster on big game hunting provides a "slow start"- lots of sitting/waiting/ being quiet, waiting for deer to appear (at a bait pile?).

Current law requires firearm deer hunters to be 14 years old prior to hunting deer or bear with a firearm, while a youth may hunt deer with archery equipment at age 12. Recommendation is to lower the age for all big game hunting to 12.

The committee considered the following factors:

- few reasons appear to exist to separate lawful age for archery deer hunting of big game from firearm big game hunting: youths rarely appear in either category (shooter or victim) in hunter casualty statistics.
- key consideration is a clear and concise definition of adult supervision for youth hunting.

Costs to change? No costs foreseen.

Benefits (including revenue) to changes?

- still would maintain an age for "apprenticeship" in small game hunting, if implemented along with lowering that age to 10

The following topics were discussed at length; the sub-committee's consensus was to not forward a recommendation, but rather advance the ideas to the full committee for further discussion.

Existing commission orders create special youth hunting opportunities: help or hindrance? Consider replacing (or augmenting) special youth hunting days with special youth hunting education opportunities that utilize personnel and facilities from the private sector and the Department.

Currently MI has the following:

- pre-regular season 2-day deer hunt with firearms/bows
(adult may not possess a firearm) (baiting prohibited)

Benefits (including revenue) to changes?

- pre-regular season opener 2 –day waterfowl youth hunt

(often coincides with goose season, so adults can lawfully hunt)

- parties with youths obtain preferred treatment in drawings at certain managed waterfowl areas

Youth deer hunting days in current practice have generated some negative feedback from deer hunters from a variety of corners. It has also been the source of a few instances of the illegal taking of deer by an adult under guise of allowing a youth to take the deer.

Under current practice, dedicated youth-hunting days may also:

- send a message to youths that is “their” deer season; no reason to participate in regular seasons.

- send a message to adults that is “the kids” deer season; no reason to encourage the youths to participate in regular seasons.

- erode the traditions of deer hunting (openers, going to camp, etc.)

- create an adversarial relationship between those who participate in youth days and those who perceive them as a nuisance (frightens off the deer, too many bucks killed before season, kids get first shot at big bucks, etc.)

- provide a manner under which certain violators can wilfully break game laws by illegally taking deer before other seasons open.

- create a situation in which adults are tempted to violate the law by baiting deer for the youth hunt (baiting is prohibited prior to October 1), sending a wrong message to youths about that being a law that is OK to break.

- place a lot of pressure on “junior” to make good within the time framework of the special two–day hunt.

Existing “positives”:

- currently it provides a 2-day hunt during which adults can focus all their attention on the youths

Effectiveness/enforceability?

- current practice of special youth hunts may place an additional enforcement and discretionary burden on conservation officers.

Costs to change?

- Replacing youth hunting days with youth-deer workshop days would work best if the two recommendations regarding lowering the age limit for hunting (above) were enacted.

Consideration: instead of youth deer **hunt** weekend, there is a youth deer **workshop** weekend. . . .use all of the state ranges for marksmanship training, possibly some private ranges; use local department and non-department personnel as “instructors to teach short workshops on how to

use a deer grunt tube, how to age your deer, something about deer biology, some tried-and-true tactics on deer hunting....have give-aways and possible some door prizes, etc. This would take a combined effort, but once it was done once and thoroughly trouble-shot, it could be a blueprint for use everywhere. How many locations would be needed to make it meaningful and available? Partnerships with private sector? Team-building, rather than adversary-creating?

Hunting license discounts (how about a family license?)

-seniors -youths hunters with disabilities

Current practice is to give a considerable discount to seniors and youths on hunting licenses. A good argument can be made that seniors have more time to hunt, and more disposable income, than ever before.....whereas at age 17 (still in school) the discount disappears....for a young hunter, the jump from the \$1 youth small game license to the \$14 cost seems huge.

This topic needs to be part of a larger overall review of licensing.

Access to abundant southern lower peninsula game is limited and the Hunter Access Program appears to be in decline.

Hunting laws and regulations appear “too complicated”.

Hunting regulations are pulled in many directions by managers, law enforcement, constituent groups and the legislature. Current structure (commission order under enabling statute for most regulations) provides the opportunity for the department to continue to simplify (or standardize) its regulations.

The perception of complicated regulations alone can discourage new hunters from containing in the sport, and seem too imposing for a prospective hunter to even begin.

Most conservation violations today are misdemeanor crimes; translated, a conviction carries with it a criminal record, so to speak.

Is there a way conservation law enforcement can bring a different approach to entry-level hunters?

-written warnings

-de-criminalization of certain lesser offenses

Current regulations are designed in part to maximize opportunities geographically, be species- however, this contributes to the complexity of the regs.

Hunting/fishing digests are complex and hard to follow and interpret:

-need to standardize the digest format to be greatest extent possible- from hunting to waterfowl to ORV.

Some season openers are not on Saturdays. Consider moving opening day for firearm deer to a Saturday (as in WI):

Currently some of our hunting seasons open on a calendar day (Nov 15 for deer, Oct 20 for pheasant, Sept 15 for “small game”, etc.). Others open on specific Saturdays (waterfowl, with many “openers” across the state). First, this adds to the perception of complexity of the regulations.

The occasional mid-week openers for deer hunting, primarily firearm deer which is limited to 16 days of hunting, may create a barrier to youths actively participating in the traditions of opening day deer hunting (both hunting and “going to camp”).

Need to assess deer hunter opinion on this topic.

Baiting for deer- does the practice stimulate interest in deer hunting and success, or does it lower the expectations of new hunters?

Perception that hunting over bait nullifies the skills previously associated with successful deer hunting.

Perception that hunting over bait makes it easier to attract/ hook new hunters as it provides the opportunity to see more deer.

Perception that baiting for deer creates a territoriality that creates conflict between hunters.

Access for hunters with disabilities is perceived as limited.

Aging population represents our greatest source of mentors; access to public lands is limited for hunters with disabilities.

Current practice allows use of ORV under a physician’s statement to access state forest roads in LP that are closed to other users.

Current regulations allow use of ORV, any time, any where on state lands, to retrieve dead deer/bear/elk; but cannot be used to access hunting blinds, etc., that are off-trail.

Aging “baby boomers” represent a powerful outdoors lobby (and a large segment of our license buyers). Can we accommodate them without sacrificing the spirit of “fair chase”?

-How do we maintain the participation of our senior citizens and those with disabilities?

- crossbow permits
- modified bow permits (mentioned in digest?)
- PHSV (mentioned in digest?) (what is SOS language for parking permit?)
- ORV affidavit
- discounted licenses
- use of laser sights

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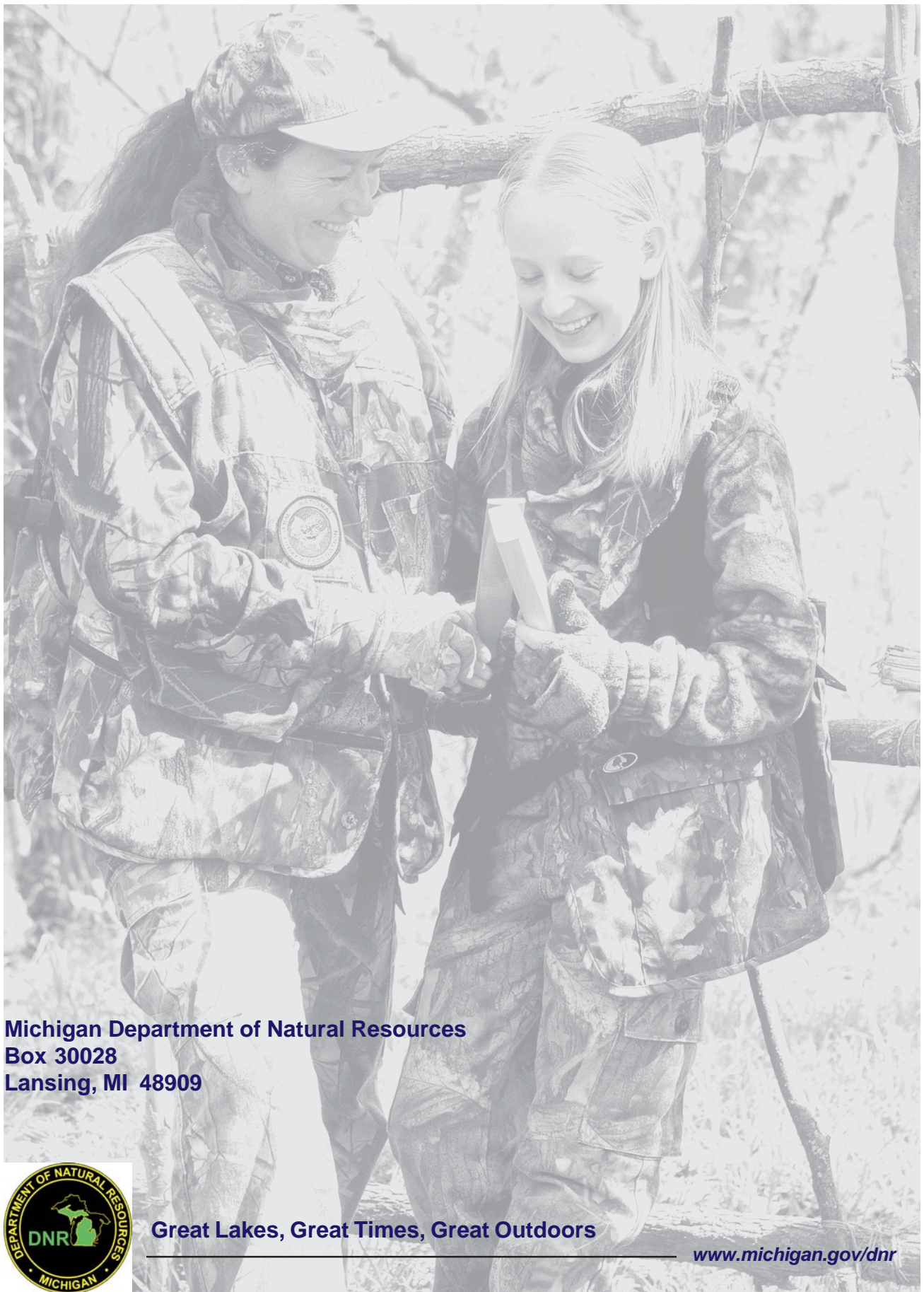
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